

We claim:

1. An electronic safe for accepting both cash and non-cash deposits comprising:
a bill acceptor for accepting both the cash deposits and the non-cash deposits;
a controller for controlling the operation of the bill acceptor, and for receiving an indication of the value of the non-cash deposits; and
a cassette for storing both the cash deposits and the non-cash deposits.
2. The electronic safe of claim 1 further comprising a data entry apparatus for entering the value of the non-cash deposits, and wherein the data entry apparatus transmits the indication of the value of the non-cash deposits to the controller.
3. The electronic safe of claim 1 wherein the indication of the value of the non-cash deposits is transmitted from a point of sale terminal.
4. The electronic safe of claim 1 wherein the indication identifies the type of the non-cash deposit.
5. The electronic safe of claim 1 wherein the non-cash deposit comprises an envelope.
6. The electronic safe of claim 5 wherein the envelope contains a check.
7. The electronic safe of claim 5 wherein the envelope contains a currency note which cannot be accepted as a cash deposit.
8. The electronic safe of claim 5 wherein the envelope identifies the type of non-cash deposit.
9. The electronic safe of claim 5 wherein the envelope identifies the amount of the non-cash deposit.
10. The electronic safe of claim 1 wherein the bill acceptor is further for accepting an identifying tag.
11. The electronic safe of claim 10 wherein the identifying tag identifies the value of the non-cash deposit.
12. The electronic safe of claim 10 wherein the identifying tag identifies the type of non-cash deposit.
13. The electronic safe of claim 1 wherein the non-cash deposit comprises a printed identification slip which identifies a change in a cashier managed event.

14. An electronic safe comprising:
means for accepting and storing deposits;
means for communicating with an identification tag, said identification tag identifying a person interacting with the electronic safe.

15. The electronic safe of claim 14 wherein the identification tag identifies the person interacting with electronic safe as someone making a deposit into the safe, withdrawing cash from the safe, or requesting a report to be generated by the safe.

16. The electronic safe of claim 14 wherein the identification tag is for wearing around the wrist of the person placing deposits.

17. The electronic safe of claim 14 wherein the means for communicating periodically transmits a polling signal to determine the presence of the identification tag.

18. The electronic safe of claim 14 wherein the means for communicating includes a transmitter, and power for the identification tag is supplied from the transmitter.

19. The electronic safe of claim 14 wherein the identification tag functions as an electronic key.

20. The electronic safe of claim 14 wherein the means for communicating utilizes radio frequency (RF) technology to communicate with the identification tag.

21. An electronic safe comprising:
means for accepting and storing deposits; and
means for communicating with a wireless portable device, said wireless portable device for configuring the safe.

22. The electronic safe of claim 21 wherein the means for communicating utilizes infrared communication to communicate with the wireless portable device.

23. The electronic safe of claim 21 wherein the portable device is for causing the electronic safe to generate reports.

24. The electronic safe of claim 21 wherein the portable device is for updating operating code of the electronic safe.

25. The electronic safe of claim 24 wherein the portable device is further for initiating the printing of the automatically generated reports.

26. An electronic safe system comprising:

a plurality of electronic safes; and

a wireless network connecting said plurality of safes.

27. The electronic safe system of claim 26 further comprising:

a communications node for providing wireless communications to an off site host system.

28. The electronic safe system of claim 27 wherein the off site host system remotely monitors the plurality of electronic safes.

29. The electronic safe system of claim 27 wherein the communications node comprises a wireless modem.

30. The electronic safe system of claim 26 wherein the wireless network connects the plurality of safes to an external network.

31. An electronic safe comprising:

means for accepting deposits;

a cassette for storing the deposits; and

means for predicting when the cassette will be full of deposits.

32. An electronic safe comprising:

means for accepting deposits;

means for storing deposits; and

means for automatically generating and storing reports detailing the operation of the electronic safe during a predetermined period.

33. The electronic safe of claim 32 further comprising means for printing the stored reports when instructed by an authorized person.

34. The electronic safe of claim 32 wherein the reports include the amount of deposits per shift.

35. The electronic safe of claim 32 wherein the reports include the amount of deposits per cashier over a predetermined period of time.

36. An electronic safe comprising:

means for accepting deposits;

means for storing deposits;

a controller for controlling the operation of the safe, said controller for tracking the number of hours worked by an employee.

37. The electronic safe of claim 36 wherein the employee provides an indication to the electronic safe when the employee arrives at work and when the employee leaves work.

38. The electronic safe of claim 37 wherein the employee provides the indication by entering an identification number on an input device of the electronic safe.

39. The electronic safe of claim 36 wherein the controller tracks the number of hours worked by the employee by detecting an identification tag attached to the employee.

40. The electronic safe of claim 36 further comprising means for generating periodic reports of the number of hours worked.

41. A method of operating an electronic safe for accepting both cash and non-cash deposits, said electronic safe comprising a bill acceptor for accepting both the cash deposits and the non-cash deposits, a controller for controlling the operation of the bill acceptor and receiving an indication of the value of the non-cash deposits, and a cassette for storing both the cash deposits and the non-cash deposits, the method comprising the steps of:

placing a non-cash deposit into an envelope;
placing the envelope into the bill acceptor; and
storing the envelope in the cassette.

42. The method of claim 41 wherein the electronic safe further comprises a data entry apparatus for entering the value of the non-cash deposits, the method further comprising the step of:

transmitting an indication of the value of the non-cash deposits to the controller by the data entry apparatus.

43. The method of claim 41 further comprising the step of:
transmitting from a point of sale terminal the value of the non-cash deposit.

44. The method of claim 41 further comprising the step of:
communicating to the electronic safe the type of the non-cash deposit.

45. The method of claim 44 further comprising the step of:
transmitting from a point of sale terminal the type of the non-cash deposit.

46. The method of claim 41 wherein the envelope contains a check.

47. The method of claim 41 wherein the envelope contains a currency note which cannot be accepted as a cash deposit.

48. The method of claim 41 wherein the envelope identifies the type of non-cash deposit.

49. The method of claim 41 wherein the envelope identifies the amount of the non-cash deposit.

50. The method of claim 41 further comprising the step of:
inserting an identifying tag in the bill acceptor, the identifying tag identifying the type of the non-cash deposit.

51. The method of claim 50 wherein the identifying tag identifies the value of the non-cash deposit.

52. The method of claim 50 wherein the identifying tag identifies the type of non-cash deposit.

53. A method of operating an electronic safe, the electronic safe comprising apparatus for accepting and storing deposits, and apparatus for communicating with an identification tag, said identification tag identifying a person interacting with the electronic safe, the method comprising the steps of:

attaching the identification tag to a person;

interacting with the electronic safe by the person;

identifying, by the electronic safe, the identity of the person interacting with the electronic safe by detecting the identification tag; and

recording and storing the identity of the person interacting with the electronic safe.

54. The method of claim 53 wherein the identification tag identifies the person interacting with electronic safe as someone making a deposit into the safe, withdrawing cash from the safe, or requesting a report to be generated by the safe.

55. The method of claim 53 wherein the identification tag is worn around the wrist of the person interacting with the electronic safe.

56. The method of claim 53 further comprising the step of:

transmitting a polling signal to determine the presence of the identification tag.

57. The method of claim 53 wherein the means for communicating includes a radio frequency (RF) transmitter, and power for the identification tag is supplied from the transmitter.

58. The method of claim 53 wherein the identification tag functions as an electronic key.

59. A method of operating an electronic safe, the electronic safe comprising apparatus for accepting and storing deposits, and apparatus for communicating with a wireless portable device:

transmitting a message from the wireless portable device to the electronic safe;
receiving the message by the electronic safe; and
perform an action in response to the message by the electronic safe.

60. The method of claim 59 further comprising the step of:
transmitting configuration information from the wireless portable device to the electronic safe.

61. The method of claim 59 wherein the electronic safe utilizes infrared communication to communicate with the wireless portable device.

62. The method of claim 59 wherein the transmitted message causes the electronic safe to generate reports.

63. The method of claim 59 further comprising the step of:
transmitting updated operating code to the electronic safe by the wireless portable device.

64. A method of operating an electronic safe, the electronic safe comprising apparatus for accepting deposits, a cassette for storing the deposits, and a controller for controlling the operation of the electronic safe, the method comprising the steps of:

monitoring the rate of deposits made to the electronic safe; and
predicting when the cassette will be full of deposits.

65. The method of claim 64 further comprising the step of:
communicating a message indicating when the electronic safe will be full.

66. A method of operating an electronic safe, the electronic safe comprising apparatus for accepting deposits, a cassette for storing the deposits, and a controller for controlling the operation of the electronic safe, the method comprising the steps of:

monitoring the operation of the electronic safe by the controller; and
automatically generating and storing reports detailing the operation of the electronic safe.

67. The method of claim 66 further comprising the step of:

printing the stored reports when instructed by an authorized person.

68. The method of claim 67 wherein the reports include the amount of deposits per shift.

69. The method of claim 67 wherein the reports include the amount of deposits per cashier over a predetermined period of time.

70. A method of tracking employee hours worked by an electronic safe, the electronic safe comprising apparatus for accepting and storing deposits, and a controller for controlling the operation of the safe, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving an indication when an employee begins work;

receiving an indication when the employee stops work; and

tracking the number of hours worked by an employee.

71. The method of claim 70 wherein the employee provides the indication by entering an identification number on an input device of the electronic safe.

72. The method of claim 70 wherein the controller tracks the number of hours worked by the employee by detecting an identification tag attached to the employee.

73. The method of claim 70 further comprising the step of:

generating periodic reports of the number of hours worked.